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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/217-E/1994/103) on the proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). During the consideration of the report, a representative of the Secretary-General provided additional information to the Advisory Committee.

2. The report of the Secretary-General was prepared pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 48/111 of 20 December 1993, in which the Secretary-General was requested, through the Advisory Committee, to submit to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994 a report on the proposed merger and to include therein:

(a) A clear analysis of the financial benefits resulting from the merger;

(b) An estimate of the one-time non-recurrent costs of the merger, including costs of transitional measures, as well as an estimate of the recurrent costs of the merger;

(c) Details of the current staffing structure of UNIFEM and INSTRAW, together with details of the proposed structure, including reporting arrangements;

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* A/49/150.

(d) Staffing implications;

(e) A report on consultations with the host Government of INSTRAW.

3. By paragraph 4 of the same resolution the Secretary-General was requested to include in his report consideration of potential duplication of the training activities of INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

4. In paragraph 5 of the resolution the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council to submit its final recommendations to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session for its consideration and action before 31 December 1994. Upon inquiry, the representative of the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee that it was expected that the relocation to New York would occur by 31 March 1995.

5. Paragraphs 1 to 8 of the report of the Secretary-General contain background information relating to the proposed merger. Information on discussions with the Government of the Dominican Republic is provided in paragraphs 9 to 14 of the report. Main features of the proposed merger are outlined in paragraphs 15 to 22. Information relating to organization, budget and staffing is provided in paragraphs 23 to 36. Paragraphs 37 to 39 of the report deal with consideration of the potential duplication of training activities of INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

6. The Advisory Committee notes from its review of the report of the Secretary-General that information included therein does not entirely meet the requirements set out in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 48/111. The report of the Secretary-General does not describe clearly the purpose and advantages of the proposed merger, nor does it provide a clear analysis of the financial benefits resulting from the merger. A net savings of $605,500 referred to in paragraph 25 of the report of the Secretary-General, reflects, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, only a short-term effect of the merger and does not necessarily indicate that this proposed administrative merger will be financially beneficial in a longer-term perspective. Moreover, it is not indicated how any savings will be utilized to strengthen research and training programmes (see para. 17 (e) of the report). Furthermore, the report does not contain a cost comparison between New York and Santo Domingo; there is no indication of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two locations, and no explanation is provided of the rationale for estimating reimbursement to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the share of common costs.

7. The Advisory Committee further notes from paragraphs 25 and 32 of the report, that the result of the proposed merger would be a net reduction of 19 INSTRAW posts in the management, information and administrative areas and a relocation of 9 INSTRAW posts to New York, while only 2 INSTRAW posts (1 Professional and 1 General Service) would remain in Santo Domingo. Taking this into account, the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the Secretary-General should provide additional justification for the capacity of INSTRAW to carry out research and training activities, especially those conducted in Santo Domingo.

8. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee notes that while paragraph 17 (f) of the report specifies that facilities at Santo Domingo "would focus on the

carrying out of a broad range of decentralized training programmes on behalf of UNIFEM/INSTRAW", paragraph 33 provides that these facilities would deal with "documents control, printing and administration and general services". The Committee believes that this contradiction needs to be clarified. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee questions the proposed arrangement by which the training programme of INSTRAW will be handled both in New York and Santo Domingo.

9. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 16 of the report that under the proposed new arrangements, the distinct identities, mandates, comparative advantages and characteristics of the two programmes, including the capacity to carry out independent research and related training activities for the advancement of women, would be maintained. The Advisory Committee points out that INSTRAW is an operational programme, while UNIFEM operates as a funding mechanism. The short- and long-term effects of the merger on programme delivery of both INSTRAW and UNIFEM have not been analysed. Furthermore, the cost-effectiveness of INSTRAW operating in two locations has not been examined.

10. Since the report of the Secretary-General does not provide a detailed description of responsibilities of staff of the two entities after the proposed merger, the Advisory Committee is not in a position to share at this stage the notion reflected in paragraph 16 of the report, namely, that "linkages and commonalities between the two programmes, and coordination between them, would be reinforced".

11. In connection with the reporting arrangements outlined in paragraph 19 of the report, the Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will ensure that the appropriate legislative sequence of consideration of the biennial report on programme activities is adhered to.

12. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 17 of the report, that though the two programmes would be placed under common management, to be located in New York, the distinct identities of the INSTRAW Trust Fund and of the United Nations Development Fund for Women would be maintained, and they would be separately open to contributions, including those pledged at the annual United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities. Upon inquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that custody in respect of the INSTRAW Trust Fund is currently entrusted to the United Nations Controller, while custody in respect of the United Nations Development Fund for Women currently belongs to UNDP.

13. The Advisory Committee notes that while the report of the Secretary-General touches upon coordination mostly between INSTRAW and UNIFEM, the General Assembly in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/111 urged that the interaction between INSTRAW, UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women be reviewed and rationalized. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that INSTRAW was established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998 (LX) of 12 May 1976 after a recommendation made by the World Conference of International Women's Year, held in Mexico in 1975. Economic and Social Council resolution 1998 (LX) was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 31/135 of 16 December 1976. The Advisory Committee believes that the forthcoming Fourth World Conference on

Women, to be held in the latter part of 1995, could review the proposed institutional arrangements referred to by the General Assembly in resolution 48/111. The Committee believes that the Secretary-General should provide additional information on the results of such a review, taking into account deliberations at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

14. Taking the above into account, the Advisory Committee expects to revert to this matter in the context of its consideration of the administrative and financial implications of such resolution as may be before the General Assembly following the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council on the merger. The Committee trusts, therefore, that the Secretary-General's statement of administrative and financial implications will contain detailed information on the financial benefits resulting from the merger, including its long-term implications, a detailed description of responsibilities of staff after the merger, the rationale for estimating reimbursement to UNDP and the share of common costs and a detailed description of the proposed financial mechanism and of the programme of work to be implemented after the merger.